THE CLEVELAND
MUSEUM OF ART
11150 EAST
BOULEVARD
CLEVELAND, OHIO
44106-1797

CMA
LXXV

March 10, 1992

Contact: Denise Horstman

RETURN TO GLORY: THE CLEANING OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL FRESCOS
Vatican Representative to Lecture on Michelangelo's Masterpiece
March 21, 1992

Walter Persegati, International Coordinator of Patrons and Friends of the Vatican Museums, will give a free lecture at The Cleveland Museum of Art about the extensive and controversial restoration of Michelangelo's five-centuries-old masterwork, the Sistine Chapel frescoes. He will speak at 3:30 pm on Saturday, March 21, 1992, in Gartner Auditorium, giving a 50-minute talk with before-and-after slides and showing a 55-minute film including footage taken on the scaffolding during the work.

The private chapel of the popes at the Vatican in Rome, the Sistine Chapel, named for Pope Sixtus IV, was built in 1473. The best known of its world-famous decorations are Michelangelo's paintings of Biblical scenes on the ceiling and his depiction of the *Last Judgment* on the altar wall. The lamp black, glues, and dirt which have obscured Michelangelo's paintings, along with well-intentioned restorations of the past, gave rise to a myth that the artist whose sculptures are so powerful was a poor colorist who chose dim, muted tones for his paintings.

Dr. Persegati's talk will include the following: what prompted the Vatican Museums to undertake the thirteen-year cleaning project; Michelangelo's fresco technique; cleaning techniques and discoveries the restorers made, including how bright the colors really are; how the restorers detected Michelangelo's own changes over the frescoes and protected them from being removed with the grime; whether Michelangelo himself may have frescoed some of the loincloths covering figures in the *Last Judgment* and how the conservators plan to treat

TEL (216) 421-7340
FAX (216) 421-0411

Seventy-fifth
Anniversary

alterations made after Michelangelo completed the work; and how long the present cleaning is expected to last.

Dr. Persegati was Secretary General and Treasurer of the Vatican Monuments, Museums, and Art Galleries from 1971 to 1990, and for nine of those years he was directly involved in the Sistine Chapel project. He was also responsible for organizing and bringing to the United States the 1983-84 exhibition **The Vatican Collections: Papacy and Art.** He has been co-founder of the International Federation of Catholic Youth Organizations, assistant Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and active in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Officially retired, he continues his connection with the Vatican Museums as International Coordinator of Patrons and Friends, and believes the Sistine Chapel cleaning project has been his most challenging and spiritually rewarding activity.

Dr. Persegati received an honorary doctorate degree in law at the Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. He lives in Rome and comes to the United States several times a year.

# # #

For more information, photographs, or color slides, please contact Denise Horstman, Public Information, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland OH 44106; 216/421-7340.